Winston H. Hickox
Agency Secretary

Air Resources Board

Alan C. Lloyd, Ph.D.
Chairman
1001 I Street • P.O. Box 2815 • Sacramento, California 95812 • www.arb.ca.gov

Gray Davis
Governor

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Managers and Supervisors

FROM: Cindy Francisco
Safety Coordinator

DATE: February 1, 2002

SUBJECT: SAFETY MEETING IDEAS – FEBRUARY 2002

Suggested issues to discuss during your next meeting are:

1. Who Do Employees Report Health & Safety Concerns to?

   Although the responsibilities for health and safety are shared between the Executive Office, Managers/Supervisors and all employees, employees are encouraged to talk with their manager regarding health and safety concerns. Employees can also contact their division Health and Safety Coordinator or Cindy Francisco, Safety Coordinator. Another means to report concerns anonymously is through the Virtual Brown Bag.

2. Back Injury Prevention

   Jokes about nagging back pain get standup comedians a lot of laughs, but back strains and sprains are not at all funny, nor should they be an unavoidable curse to anyone.

   According to the State Compensation Insurance fund, back injuries suffered in California's workplaces last year ran up a bill of millions of dollars. Those disabling back injuries were no laughing matter for the workers who lost time from work or from their personal activities. The sad truth is that most of the pain and lost time could have been prevented if workers had been more aware of how their backs function and how to safely lift bulky or heavy loads.

   The back is a network of fragile ligaments, discs, and muscles which can easily be thrown out of order. The back's complex design breaks down when it is forced to perform activities it was not designed to do.

One sure way to risk injuring the back is to lift heavy or bulky loads improperly or unassisted. The unsupported back cannot operate like a derrick or a crane boom. Lifting with the back twisted or bent just begs for a pulled muscle or ruptured disc. The back can be damaged quickly but can take a long time to heal. So workers should be encouraged to do their lifting with good sense and a little extra help from a co-worker or mechanical aid.

Workers should learn to squat over the item to be lifted, and face it squarely. In this position, the back gets added lifting strength and power from the legs and arms. Teach workers to tilt the item on edge with its long axis straight up so the the center of the weight is as high as possible above the ground. Next, the worker should move up close to the item, because the backbone must act as a supporting column, and it takes the least strain close in. In this position, the worker is ready to lift. Still squatting, the feet should be set with legs pointed right at the load, with the back straightened, the worker may then grasp the load with both arms and slowly stand up with it.

A good way to help workers learn the right from the wrong way to lift, is to have them practice lifting correctly a few times. They will notice that the correct way to lift is the easiest way to lift the load, with the least strain and awkwardness. To lift the wrong way will, over time, cause injury and pain and then no one will be laughing.

3. Material Data Safety Sheet (MSDS) - Your Right to Know

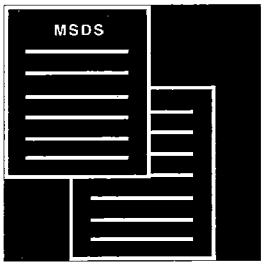
MSDS information is available by the manufacturer for anything used in the workplace that contains chemicals. Everyone should be aware of their existence. Our laboratories have binders of MSDS information available. Even the products used by the janitorial services to keep our offices clean must provide MSDS information. If you are interested in the MSDS for those products, contact your Business Services Office and they will provide the information for you. But before you ask for the information, learn how to sort through the technical information for what's important for you to know by reading the attached page.

Document your meeting by using Form HS-1 "Safety Meeting Report" which I have attached for your convenience. This can also be used, if you choose, to route the information to each employee. This record should be kept in your files for one year.

If you have any questions, I can be reached at (916) 323-1158 or cfrancis@arb.ca.gov.

CHEMICAL
SAFETY

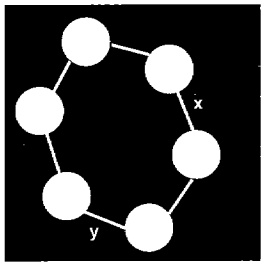
Beyond the "Right to Know"



The material data safety sheet—MSDS. You've seen it, and you know it tells everything you need to know about the hazardous chemical you are working with—and probably more. Can you sort through all that technical information and zero in on what's important for you to know? Asking the right questions can help you get the information you need to work safely with each hazardous chemical. Here are some questions the MSDS can answer.

Sections 1-2 What Is It?

Find out what the chemical is, who makes it, what's in it and how much of each component there is. The MSDS includes common names for the chemical and names of substances in the chemical that may be dangerous. It will list the severity of the chemical's hazard.



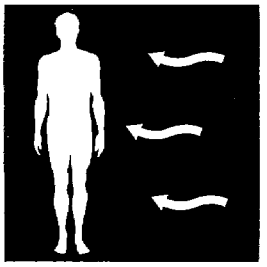
Section 3 What's It Like?

The chemical's physical characteristics can help you know what to expect from it. Some chemicals become hazardous when they evaporate, especially if they are flammable or harmful to breathe. The vapor pressure tells how easily the chemical vaporizes; the higher the vapor pressure, the more likely you are to inhale it. Vapor density indicates how heavy the vapor is; if heavier than air, it will accumulate in low places. Other qualities—solubility in water, appearance, odor, reactivity with water, and specific gravity (whether the chemical floats or sinks in water)—can help you understand where the chemical is likely to be concentrated in the working environment.

Sections 4-5 What Other Dangers Are There?

Is the chemical hazardous when mixed with other substances or exposed to air or water? Is it combustible? Flammable? Explosive? To avoid improper handling that could lead to a fire or explosion, you need to know the flash point—the lowest temperature at which the chemical's vapor will ignite in the presence of a spark or fire—and the auto-ignition temperature—the temperature at which the chemical will ignite without a spark.

Section 6 Can It Harm Me?



Find out what health hazards can result from exposure. What are the symptoms and treatments? How can the chemical enter your body—through the skin, by breathing, by swallowing? What type of hazard is it—is it cancer- causing, an irritant? What emergency first aid should be sought?

Section 7-6 How Do I Protect Myself?

Find out what protective clothing and equipment to wear and how to handle the substance safely. If you are storing or transporting the substance, what special precautions must you take? The MSDS contains a bewildering amount of data, some of it extremely technical. By knowing what questions to ask when reading the MSDS, you can more quickly find the most important information.